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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, KPAO, GM
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN U.S.-GERMANY GERMANY-U.S.
AVIAN FLU UKRAINE AUTRIA-EU;BERLIN

A. Lead Stories Summary
B. (Iran) Nuclear Program
C. (U.S.-Germany) Merkel Visit To Washington
D. (Germany-U.S.) German Role In Iraq War
E. (Europe) Spread Of Avian Flu
F. (Ukraine) Aftermath Of Natural Gas Deal
G. (EU) Austrian Presidency

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
DATE/CASE ID: 27 FEB 2009 200706444

A. Lead Stories Summary

HEADLINES

EU Worried About Global Peace - Tehran Calls It Much Ado About Iran (Frankfurter Allgemeine)

BND Helped Americans In Iraq War (Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

West Is Losing Patience With Iran (Die Welt)

Stricter Controls Against Avian Flu (Frankfurter Rundschau)

Growing Fear In Germany On Spread Of Avian Flu (Tagesspiegel)

Endurance Test For Merkel During Visit To Washington (Berliner Zeitung)

Editorials focused on the spread of the avian flu, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the strikes of port workers. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with story on measures to stop the spread of the avian flu.

B. (Iran) Nuclear Program

1. "Dr. Strangelove In Tehran"

Michael Naumann opined in a front-page editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (1/12):

"On Tuesday, Foreign Minister Steinmeier threatened Iran with 'consequences,' and even Russia and China showed their 'concern,' but their concern borders on hypocrisy.. With North Korean assistance, Iran is equipping its army with missiles - certainly not for conventional warheads. With Russian assistance, Iran is building nuclear power plants in which it can produce weapons-gradable plutonium; with Pakistan's assistance, Iran learned how to build the nuclear bomb, and it is hardly of any consequence whether Iran will have nuclear warheads in half a year or in four years..

"The only thing that remains is a political solution, but the West has obstructed this solution. The EU troika offered a few political and economic sticks in exchange for Iran's nuclear good behavior, while the Americans threatened with the stick and curses from a distance. But with this curious division of labor, it was impossible to build up

political and psychological pressure. In addition, Iran is aware of the fate of the other 'rogue state' North Korea: it is not being attacked because it has nuclear weapons.

"For the majority of Iranians, a nuclear bomb is a symbol not only of military but also of cultural equality with the West. That is why regime change with the support of the people is far away. There is only one last strategy for the West and Israel: Iran will face a total economic and absolutely diplomatic isolation if it leaves the group of nuclear-free nations. But this would require China and Russia to bid farewell to their geo-political dreams in the

Gulf and that the nuclear powers finally act as model pupils, too; but more than 27,000 nuclear warheads in their arsenals are ruining every disarmament argument. There will be only one certainty if the next talks fail, too: Iran will arm itself with nuclear weapons and the powerful nations will watch without being able or wanting to do anything. But if political madness is striving for the nuclear bomb without the stronger and more reasonable nations stopping this development, the disaster the foreign minister speaks of, will take its course."

2. "End Of The Presumption Of Innocence"

Business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (1/12) had this to say:

"What wrong exactly did Tehran commit? There are still voices underlining that Iran has not violated international treaties.. This purely legalistic assessment that rules out any political evaluation of the nuclear conflict is misleading. The 'right' to which many people refer in this respect can no longer be ascribed to the mullahs in Tehran. Iran has no longer been a 'normal' partner of the international community of nations. Not only because the country has an unpredictable and fanatic president who praises suicide attacks and propagates Israel's extermination. Tehran broke previous promises too often. It did not stick to agreements but lied to and made a fool of the international community. That is why the presumption of innocence can no longer be valid. It is appropriate to say that the burden of proof now lies with Iran and that distrust must be the prime maxim in treating Iran. The world can no longer assume that Iran is pursuing purely civil intentions with its nuclear program but the world must assume that Iran is striving for the nuclear bomb and is pursuing aggressive goals. Tony Blair has now understood

this. It is high time to discuss the matter at the UN Security Council."

3. "Fatal"

Richard Meng had this to say in an editorial in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (1/12):

"Tony Blair no longer rules out anything.but the truth is that the West is rather helpless. Whatever the Europeans or Americans do, it has no effect. In Tehran, positions are hardening. Only the pace of the escalation is open. There is no promising approach for negotiations between the EU-3 and Iran. At the Berlin conference between the three EU foreign ministers and EU Security Commissioner Solana the issue is to suspend the talks or to bury them, and the latter seems to be more likely. But what then? The situation in the Middle East is so fragile and the situation in Iraq so difficult that even the duo Bush/Blair will not seriously think about a new military confrontation. But the dubious Iranian nuclear activities are almost provoking the involvement of the UN Security Council. But then [the West] must expect further threats which could also escalate the situation. But right now, Iran is a matter for the IAEA. It is now necessary for the IAEA to sketch out a policy that can be accepted by the global community."

C. (U.S.-Germany) Merkel Visit To Washington

1. Tina Hassel commented on ARD-TV's (national channel one) late evening newscast Tagesthemen (1/11):

"Chancellor Merkel's demand that Guantnamo, the U.S. torture camp, must be closed came late. During her last visit as opposition leader, Merkel had kept quiet. Now, she wants to clearly address the hot issue with the deaf American president. That's good; the former Red-Green government did not dare this.. The moral hint towards Washington leaves a strange aftertaste. Interior Minister SchQuble recently had to confirm that German investigators interrogated detainees in Guantnamo, and many questions over covert CIA flights over Germany and secret prisons in Europe have not yet been answered. In Guantnamo, America has lost its democratic face in front of the world. Whether Europe will gamble away its credibility in this issue will significantly depend on a clear rejection of torture."

2. "Merkel's Trauma"

Nico Fried noted in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (1/12):

"In transatlantic relations, Merkel is making great efforts to overcome a political trauma: the reputation of being submissive to the Bush administration. In the election campaign, she decided against the obligatory visit t
to the Washington in order to not awaken the negative memory most Germans had of her last visit. She has been bravely insisting for months that she has always ruled out deploying German soldiers in Iraq, which is simply not true.. Of course, it is better now than never that Merkel rectifies her policy. But it is also true that she has no option. Lies before the Iraq war, the debacle of the campaign, and the violations in the war on terror even shattered the conviction of those who used to stand firmly by Washington."

3. "With A Steady Hand"

Hubert Wetzel observed in business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (1/12):

"There are a number of issues where Washington and Berlin can cooperate. Top of the list is the nuclear dispute with Iran. The EU and the U.S. are working together here, but the cooperation could be even closer. It would be a great success if Merkel contributed to a real common European-American policy on Iran, in which the U.S. puts more carrots on the table and the Europeans swing the stick harder. It is difficult to believe but there are still politicians in Washington who think that Germany is an important partner - not as an individual player, not on the global stage and not at eye level with the U.S., but as a key player in the EU and therefore in American-European relations. The distrust in Germany and Europe is great, but that had to do especially with Schrder. This is Merkel's opportunity. The chancellor is seen as an unflustered and unemotional politician, which is exactly the right medication for the troubled transatlantic relations."

4. "Illusions Of A New Beginning"

Andreas Rinke argued in business daily Handelsblatt of Duesseldorf (1/12):

"The expectations of a visit of a German chancellor has not been so high for a long time. Many are hoping for a new

beginning as a result of Merkel's visit, but the expectations should adjust to the realities. Relations between countries are based on common interests and not so much on sympathies between their leaders.. Germany and the U.S. are politically and economically closely linked, but

they are worlds apart in militarily matters.. One thing will certainly not change under Merkel: Despite the common values, the view on the world differs between the U.S. and most Europeans. The idea of a common West was only aroused in the time of the Cold War, when the U.S. and Western Europe moved together to face the Soviet threat. This outside pressure decreased since 1989, and the differences that always existed play a greater role again in the thinking on both sides of the Atlantic. This will not change even given the rise of China. There will be no return to the old and cozy relations. To survive in a changing world, North America and Europe should at least be careful not to continue drifting apart. This might sound like a modest task, but it is exactly the challenge Merkel and Bush face."

5. "Cheap Presents For Bush"

Bettina Gaus wrote in leftist die tageszeitung of Berlin (1/12):

"Germans desire good transatlantic relations, but they do not want their government to grovel in the presence of the powerful ally. They do not want to deploy soldiers in Iraq, but they want to be helpful. The German chancellor will meet all these desires at the same time, and nobody will care whether the assistance for Iraq is efficient."

D. (Germany-U.S.) German Role In Iraq War

1. "German Lies In The War"

Kurt Kister judged in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (1/12):

"Not only the U.S. and British governments lied about the reasons, circumstances, and details of the Iraq war. In 2003, even two agents of the German Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) intelligence service cooperated with the Americas in Iraq.. Former BND head Hanning and ex-chancellor Schrder's coordinator of activities of German intelligence services in the Chancellery, Uhrlau, probably approved and possibly even

controlled cooperation between the BND and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). If it is also true that BND agents also helped find targets [in Iraq], then this was nothing but a participation of Germany in the war that has been kept secret thus far. Hanning and Uhrlau are either responsible for an intelligence cabal that deliberately counteracted the anti-war policy of the former Red-Green government or they were re-assured by their political boss and mainly by the former head of the Chancellery, current Foreign Minister Steinmeier.

"If the latter is true, and many indications speak for this view, Steinmeier has lost his credibility at the beginning of his term. His credibility was already tattered in connection with the CIA flights. If he has now been politically responsible for a German agent doing such a good job for the Americans in Iraq that they even awarded him a medal, Steinmeier must at least appear before a fact-finding committee. And this committee should also try to find out what 'peace chancellor' Schrder knew about the matter."

E. (Europe) Spread Of Avian Flu

1. Gnter Hetzke commented on national radio station Deutschlandfunk of Cologne (1/11):

"A transfer of the disease from man to man has thus far not been proven with respect to the avian flu. Even though the much used term 'avian flu' creates different connotations, the danger of being infected is minimal and confined to people who live close with their poultry under one roof. There is no reason for hysteria once the migration of birds begins in March. The return of birds to their home turf is still a reason for joy."

2. "Late And Brutal"

Karl-Heinz Karisch noted in an editorial in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (1/12):

"For the European countries which are increasingly threatened by the avian flu, the Turkish activities seem to o
reveal hectic activities instead of carefully implemented plans. It took very long time until the government in Ankara conceded that human beings were also infected.. If the avian flu spreads to Germany, it is less the people who will be threatened but the large poultry farms. Then the

mass killing of poultry would continue and experts are afraid that we will see such pictures more often in the future. The rapidly growing global population including its poultry farms have prepared the environment for dangerous viruses and bacteria."

F. (Ukraine) Aftermath Of Natural Gas Deal

1. Special Relations"

Reinhard Veser editorialized in center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/12):

"Ukrainian President Yushshenko and Russian President Putin have praised their good relations after the natural gas conflict. At the same time, leading politicians of Yushshenko's party are accusing the Kremlin of being behind the ouster of the Ukrainian government. We need not wait too long to find out which voice is representing the real state of relations between the two nations. Even though the presidents promised that the agreement on gas prices would be lasting despite the turbulence in Kiev, this is not certain, since too many contradictions exist with respect to the interpretation of the agreement. Is Ukraine allowed to buy natural gas directly in Central Asia or is it required to buy it from the dubious Russian RosUkrEnergo Company? This raises the question why the Ukrainian President who is always interested in democratic cleanliness has traveled to the inauguration of Kazakh autocrat Nazarbayev? It is certainly not the race with Moscow for direct access to Central Asian natural resources, isn't it?"

2. "No Political Cemetery"

Centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (1/12) judged:

"The successful vote of no-confidence has brought former revolutionary hero Yushshenko back to political reality at home.. It is true, the compromise, which Russia and Ukraine achieved in the natural gas conflict, is indeed less advantageous for Ukraine than previously reported, but Kiev's latitude in the poker game of gas supplies with the powerful neighbor was not very great. That is why the real reason for Timochenko's dressing down is not so much the natural gas conflict but the fight for undecided voters. It is true that the big bang that was orchestrated by the opposition is discrediting the government but it is hardly

of any significance. Only in Moscow do the parliamentary moves in the political maze in Kiev create some kind of malicious glee. But even if Ukraine again appears as a country of scandals, the new turbulence is evidence of a vivid parliamentarism, while a successful vote of the opposition for the ouster of the government has become unthinkable in the political cemetery of the Russian Duma."

3. "Ukrainian Swamp"

Karl Grobe noted in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (1/12):

"The Ukrainian authorities probably did not see the garden path they were led up, and some representative might have gone down this path voluntarily. It is unclear what the parliamentary committee in Kiev can investigate, but to drain the swamp would be in Europe and Germany's interest. Apart from the question whether Putin's use of energy resources as a political tool is acceptable, we must be careful that such deals do not threaten Europe's energy supplies. This is more important than our heating at home."

G. (EU) Austrian Presidency

1. "In the Wrong Movie"

Centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (1/12) noted:

"The EU fight for its own constitution has been going on for four years now, and it is still unclear whether the project is dead or still alive. Following the rejection of the draft constitution in France and the Netherlands, Europe refused to do the work of the coroner and prescribed itself a breather to think. But now the movie is beginning again. This time the director is Austria's Chancellor Schssel who said: 'The constitution is not dead.' It is understandable that Schssel pursues an ambitious goal, and it is also right that he does not want to give up plans for structural reforms.but nevertheless, he will be in the wrong movie if he thinks that he could revive the EU constitution in its previous form. Schssel should have listened to Jacques Chirac's New Year's address in which he suggested integrating passages of the constitution into existing treaties. The French president is right: more than a transplantation is not possible after death."

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